

THE
DRAMATIC CENSOR;
OR,
MONTHLY EPITOME
OF
Taste, Fashion, and Manners.

NUMBER XXXI.

FOR NOVEMBER, 1800.

*“Behold, I am against thee, O GOG!—I will TURN THEE BACK,
“and put Hooks into thy Jaws!”*

EZEKIEL.

The First and Second Volumes of the DRAMATIC CENSOR being now completed, the Work may be had, either in separate Numbers, or in Boards, price Seven Shillings each Volume, by applying to the Publishers, J. ROACH, Russell-Court, Drury-Lane; and C. CHAPPLÉ, No. 66, Pall-Mall.

COVENT-GARDEN, THURSDAY, October 23, 1800.

DAPHNE AND AMINTOR—*Bickerstaffe.* THE BIRTHDAY—*Altered from Kotzebue, by T. Dibdin.* LOCK AND KEY—*P. Hoare.*

COVENT-GARDEN, FRIDAY, October 24, 1800.

THE SUSPICIOUS HUSBAND—*Dr. Hoadly.* IRISH MIMIC—*O'Keeffe.*

THE part of *Clarinda* by Miss Lascelles, the young lady who made her *début* last season, in the character of *Eleanor*, in Mrs. Inchbald's comedy, *Every One has his Fault*. On that occasion, we sufficiently canvassed the general qua-

lifications of this actress [see Second Volume of the DRAMATIC CENSOR, page 239]; it is, therefore, only necessary to add, with respect to the performance of this evening, that her manner was much too tame and spiritless for the part she represented. *Clarinda* is a gay, lively coquet, and requires a correspondent air of sprightliness in the delineation.

Mr. Brunton succeeded to Mr. Holman's part, as the representative of *Frankly*. The former gentleman disgusted us with the turgidity of his acting: the latter falls into the contrary extreme, and becomes *vapid*.

DRURY-LANE, SATURDAY, October 25, 1800.

RULE A WIFE, AND HAVE A WIFE—*J. Fletcher.*

ACTÆON, AND DIANA—*Byrne.* WILMORE CASTLE—*Dr. Houlton.*

Mrs. Powell being indisposed, the part of *Margarita* was undertaken, at a few hours' notice, by Miss Heard, who acquitted herself to much greater advantage than could be reasonably expected, considering the circumstances under which she came forward.

The Pantomime Ballet of *Actæon and Diana* possesses neither *novelty* nor *propriety* to recommend it. It bears no analogy to mythology, in the construction of the fable; nor has it any interest, but what results from the mere agility of the dancers. It is, in fact, a representation, which might be tolerated at *Astley's*, the *Circus*, or at *Sadler's Wells*; but which reflects little credit on the taste and judgment of the Manager of a *Theatre-Royal*. Indeed, if we are to form our opinion of the extent of Mr. Kemble's discernment with respect to dramatic merit, from the specimens we have hitherto seen, in the line of *novelties* and *revivals*, he will be found to sink to a very low and degrading level. Nothing which emanates from his own impulse

impulse seems to prosper. The only end, which the production of *Actæon and Diana* appears to have answered, is the acceleration of the fate and downfal of *Wilmore Castle*. Had the Manager, from motives of personal pique, or from a constitutional disposition to exult in the misfortunes and distress of others, actually predetermined to hasten the condemnation of Dr. HOUTON's Opera, he could not more effectually have accomplished his purpose, than by introducing such a *showy* Dance, between the Play and the Entertainment, which from its length protracted the commencement of Dr. HOUTON opera till eleven o'clock, and even later. Is it to be expected, we beg leave to ask, that any audience would have the patience to *sit out* the representation of a *Two-Act* opera, after such an hour? And surely our readers do not need now to be first apprized of the bad impression, which the performance of a piece to an *empty* house, never fails to make upon the public mind.

DRURY-LANE, MONDAY, October 27, 1800.

RICHARD THE THIRD—*Shakspeare*: ACTÆON AND
DIANA—*Byrne*. WILMORE CASTLE—*Dr.*
Houltion.

MR. KEMBLE had nearly met with a very disastrous accident this evening. The traps through which the ghosts of *Richard*'s victims rise to haunt the murderer's flumbers, not being closed with sufficient promptitude, on their disappearance, Mr. Kemble in his start on the stage, was thrown with such violence as to lose his sword from his grasp. A ring was likewise torn from his finger.—He went, however, through the part with unabated vigour, amidst reiterated acclamations on the part of the audience.

COVENT-GARDEN, MONDAY, October 27, 1800.

DUENNA—*R. B. Sheridan, DESERTER OF NAPLES.*

PREVIOUS to the commencement of the Play, an appeal was made to the indulgence of the audience, in behalf of Mr. Incledon*, whose ill state of health, it was apprehended, would scarcely permit him to go through the part. This appeal was received with the sympathy due to a deserving favourite; and which manifested itself in tumultuous bursts of applause the moment Mr. Incledon made his appearance on the stage. He evidently laboured under serious indisposition, which, of course, could not fail to prove a momentous drawback upon his powers. Mr. Incledon has not performed since this evening; his illness assuming a very alarming aspect; but we are happy in being able to inform our readers, that he is now in a state of convalescence.

Mr. Hill, as *Ferdinand*, executed the airs incidental to the part with considerable address; but we cannot say much in praise of his acting. Munden's *Don Jerome* was characterized by a vein of rich humour, and afforded much entertainment. Fawcett, in his delineation of *little cunning Isaac*, has not the archness which distinguishes Mr. Quick's

* No liberal mind can view the late virulent attacks upon this gentleman, without experiencing the most lively sensations of abhorrence. The actions, the merits, and talents of public characters, are, unquestionably, legitimate objects of public criticism. But of what diabolical materials must that man's soul be composed, who can find a theme for malicious exultation in the *bodily sufferings of his fellow creatures!* who can build a joke upon the *physical infirmities of human nature!* and turn into derision the natural shocks of illness and disease, that flesh is heir to! Such persons would do well to reflect how soon the evil which they mock, may recoil upon themselves!—then how unpitied will their visitation be?

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performance: he is, however, unquestionably the best substitute for that gentleman, though, perhaps, rather too coarse in his general style of acting. Townsend, as *Father Paul*, makes a bonny friar:—but the contrast between his fat-jolly looks, and the emaciated figure of Simmons, as the *lay-brother*, though productive of much laughter, is too broad a caricature for legitimate comedy.

The *Duenna* found a representative in the person of a new actress, of the name of Powell, the widow, if we are rightly informed, of the late Mr. Powell, of this theatre. Of her countenance and figure, it is impossible to form an opinion, in this character, both being so greatly disguised, to give propriety to the part. Her voice is strong and distinct, but not very harmonious, her tones frequently grating on the ear. She does not, however, appear to be destitute of abilities, and may be a very useful performer, as an occasional *double*, or substitute for Mrs. Davenport.

Mrs. Basters, as we have frequently been led to remark, does not rank among the first order of female proportions, and consequently does not appear to the greatest advantage in breeches. But her vocal powers amply compensate for the want of other attractions. *Don Carlos* is little more than a singing part, and in this character Mrs. Basters acquits herself with great applause.

Miss Dixon personated *Louisa*, and Miss Howell appeared as the representative of *Clara*. Both these ladies possess musical talents, but they have a very imperfect idea of acting. It may well seem paradoxical, that a singer can scarcely be brought to speak with propriety.

DRURY-LANE, TUESDAY, October 28, 1800.

CASTLE SPECTRE—*M. G. Lewis.* ACTÆON AND
DIANA—*Byrne.* OLD MAID.—*A. Murphy.*

A MRS. TAYLOR, from the provincial theatres, made her *début* this evening on a metropolitan stage, in the character of *Alice* in the play, and *Miss Harlow* in the farce. She was favourably received, but is not, we understand, likely to be engaged. Indeed, the present company at Drury-Lane does not appear to stand in need of any accession in this line of characters.

The part of *Captain Cape*, in the Farce, was most admirably sustained by Mr. Dowton. In point of just delineation of character, and true comic humour, the farce of the *Old Maid* ranks among the best of modern productions, and has a legitimate claim on the patronage and favour of the public.

COVENT-GARDEN, TUESDAY, Oct. 28, 1800.

SPEED THE PLOUGH—*Morton.* ROBIN-HOOD—*MacNally.*

OWING to a mistake in arranging the manuscript at the Printer's, but which was not discovered, till the sheets had gone to press, the report of this day's performance was substituted for that of the same day, in the preceding week. A disturbance occurred at the theatre on both Tuesdays, in consequence of the representation of *Paul and Virginia* not taking place, as announced in the bills; and on both Tuesdays, an apology was made for the disappointment, by Mr. Murray. But the disturbance immediately alluded to in our last Number, page 189, refers to Tuesday the 28th, not Tuesday the 21st of October. Further, it is proper to remark, that the entertainment substituted for *Paul and Virginia*, in the first in-

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stance, was the Farce of the *Spoil'd Child*; not *Robjn-Hood*, as erroneously stated, in consequence of the mistake we have just commented upon. The reader will, therefore, please to rectify this inadvertency.

DRURY-LANE, WEDNESDAY, *October 29, 1800.*

THE REVENGE—*Dr. Young.* ACTÆON AND DIANA—
Byrne. THE CHILDREN IN THE WOOD—*Morton.*

WHEN we reflect on the great intrinsic merit of the tragedy of *The Revenge*, and the masterly performance of Mr. Kemble, in the character of *Zanga*, it may well excite sensations at once of astonishment and regret, that the representation of this play should be announced in the bills, as the *first and only time it can be performed this season!* We might name a whole host of dramas, that might, with the greatest propriety, give place to *The Revenge*: why it should be otherwise decreed by the manager, is to us, we must candidly confess, a mystery. Mrs. Powell, in the part of *Leonora*, towers above herself: her acting is marked with *traits* of superlative excellence.

COVENT-GARDEN, WEDNESDAY, *Oct. 29, 1800.*

EVERY ONE HAS HIS FAULT—*Mrs. Inchbald.*
DESERTER OF NAPLES.

DRURY-LANE, THURSDAY, *October 30. 1800.*

VIRGINIA—*Mrs. Plowden.* THE
CITIZEN—*A. Murphy.*

In reviewing the performances of this evening, our attention is strongly drawn to a circumstance, of which no precedent has before occurred, since the commencement of this Work. We allude to the absolute, irrevocable damnation, and withdrawing

drawing of a piece, on the first night of representation. And, what not a little adds to the marvel—the *condemnation* of an *Opera!* of a *musical piece!*—of a drama, the avowed production of a lady of fashion, and much deserved celebrity! The condemnation of a Play, under such circumstances, may justly be considered in the light of a *theatrical phenomenon*; and, probably, many of our readers will coincide with us in opinion, that it is a *phenomenon*, which well merits investigation and enquiry.

Whoever has been in the habit of watching the progress of the stage, of late years, and has more particularly directed his attention to the character and pretension of the host of new pieces that have been brought forward, must acknowledge, that few, very few dramas, indeed, have stood their ground on the strength of their intrinsic merit. With respect to musical pieces, this assertion holds peculiarly good. Plot, dialogue, just delineation of character, and a faithful portraiture of manners.—all these requisites, however essential in themselves, appear, in the general estimation of the public, to be objects of *secondary*; of *little*; nay, we might almost add, of *no* importance, compared with the bewitching charms of *sound*, and the gratification of the external organs of sense, the pleasing of the eye, and the tickling of the ear, at the expense of intellectual enjoyment. When, therefore, a piece, modelled after the prevailing taste of the town, powerfully supported with musical talents, and possessing all the attractions of pageantry, interspersed with dances, marches, and processions; and, in the construction of the fable and dialogue, at least upon a *par* with its predecessors—when a piece of this description, in opposition to established custom and example, meets with a spirit of decided hostility; when it experiences a reception directly the reverse of what existing circumstances would lead us to expect; when it is sentenced to

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a premature death, whilst productions of far inferior merit are eagerly applauded, and suffered to be nightly repeated—when a case of this kind occurs, we are warranted in looking to more than ordinary causes for the solution of an extraordinary event.

Foremost, on the list of these causes, we are induced to reckon the artifices and manœuvres of a professional gentleman, connected with Drury-lane Theatre, who scarcely deigns to disguise the sinister practices he adopts*, to prevent the success of any musical piece, in which he is not himself a party concerned. And here, we would beg leave to call back the attention of our readers to the circumstances which attended the condemnation of Mr. Linley's unsuccessful Entertainment, entitled "*The Pavilion*," last season. It is not our intention to arraign the verdict of the public, with respect to the fate of that piece. On the contrary, we both did, at the time, and do still, highly applaud that decision; but yet, we must take the liberty of observing, that the miscarriage of Mr. Linley's piece, is, in our opinion, less to be attributed to its inherent defects, as a dramatic composition, than to the machinations of professional jealousy, on the part of a certain musical gentleman, whose name it is needless to mention. As far, as we are justified in forming a judgment of possible contingencies from analogy, we feel firmly persuaded, on contrasting the fate of Mr. Linley's performance with the reception accorded to other productions of as little, and even less merit, that the *Pavilion* owed its downfal more to *sinister influence*; more to the practices of a musical cabal; than to the free unbiased sense of the audience.

* It may be proper to apprise the reader, that the *melodies to Virginia* are Mrs. Plowden's own composition: they were *harmonized* for representation by Dr. Arnold.

A similar spirit of opposition, originating in similar causes, seems to have displayed itself in acts of overt hostility against Mrs. Plowden's Opera. Without entering into an argument on the actual merit or demerit of that lady's production, we feel no hesitation in declaring, that from the general complexion of the piece, placed in a fair scale of comparison with the common run of our modern operas, Mrs. Plowden's drama seems, on perusal, to have merited a very different and more favourable reception than it experienced. The author, in a very sensible preface, has stated a variety of facts, which may be said to speak for themselves, all tending to prove, beyond the possibility of doubt, that her opera has been very unfairly dealt with. As we conceive it a matter of primary importance, that the malversation of *Managers* should be as freely and as generally exposed and reprobated, as the sinister practices of *play-wrights*, we shall transcribe the whole of Mrs. Plowden's preface, accompanying our extracts with such notes and observations, as appear necessary to place this extraordinary business in a proper light and point of view. In these notes and illustrations, we shall purposely be the more diffuse, as Mrs. Plowden has confined herself entirely to a statement of facts; unwilling, from a principle of delicacy, to give judgment in her own cause. This, unquestionably, is a mode of conduct highly commendable on the part of that lady; but which we did not feel it, for obvious reasons, incumbent upon ourselves to imitate. There is a wide and essential difference between Mrs. Plowden's case and our own. We are not personally interested in the dispute; we are canvassing a cause, in which we stand perfectly neuter, except in the character of a public writer: and, therefore, we may, with strict propriety, permit ourselves a greater freedom and latitude of discussion.

PREFACE

PREFACE TO VIRGINIA.

“FACTS--NOT COMMENTS.”

PENRUDDOCK, in Mr. Cumberland's *Wheel of Fortune*.

“LITTLE did I ever expect to appear before the public; much less do I now wish it. Circumstances, however, impose upon me the unavoidable necessity of doing so.

“Without entering into the question upon the aptitude and powers of the female mind for mental exertions, and the propriety of so employing it, I have but to say, that it was purely to dissipate and soften the gloom and pressure of the severest domestic misfortunes, that I first applied my mind to any sort of composition. I was, perhaps, too sanguinely encouraged by my friends to offer the production to one of the Proprietors of Drury-Lane Theatre. His acceptance of the piece, after having read it, and heard all the music, naturally inspired me with more confidence than I had before conceived of its success. It was given in to that Proprietor on the * *first* of January 1799. On the 17th of July of that year, it was *accepted*, and I was pressed to have the melodies harmonized, in order to get it ready for performance, at the opening of the theatre, last season. I naturally applied for this purpose to Dr. Arnold, whose talents, taste, and science, are too well known to the musical world, to be here spoken of; and I had, very early in life, taken some lessons in composition of him. The whole of the music was arranged, and given in to the Proprietor, on the 21st of October, 1799. It was not, however, put into rehearsal till Monday the 27th of October, 1800, *three days before its performance*, when it was played over, for the *first* time by the orchestra, in the absence of Dr. Arnold, who had given a *previous written notice* to the manager, that he could *not* attend on Mondays and Thursdays, to sit at the harpsichord.

“On Tuesday, the 28th, was the first rehearsal, *in the presence of Dr. Arnold*: but that rehearsal was extremely defective on account of the ab-

* This circumstance proves the impossibility of the *dénouement* having been borrowed from Mr. Morton's comedy of *Speed the Plough*.

sence (from severe indisposition) of Mrs. Mountain. Consequently, *none* of the Quartets, or Duets, in which *she* had a part, could be rehearsed on that day. Miss de Camp began to sicken on the same day, and *was also absent*.

I will not dissemble, that I now began to look upon the failure of the piece as certain. It was told me at the theatre, that Miss B. Menage* was to perform Mrs. Mountain's part. I replied, that *could not—must not, be*. Yet, upon applying to the manager, he informed me, it was to be so; and Mr. Kelly did not fail to assure me, that the manager had positively so decided it. The generosity of the performers on this day, very candidly and kindly pressed me rather to withdraw the piece, than permit it to be brought out on the following Thursday, in the unprepared state in which all things then were. Mr. Suett assured me, he had fretted himself to illness at the thought of its being to be brought out on the Thursday, and that he

* As sincere friends and well-wishers to the performers, in general, and to every individual in particular, we heartily congratulate this young actress on the warmth with which the *new Manager* espouses her interest. It was not many days previous to the opening of the theatre, that the manager in a private conversation with the writer of this article, declared his intentions of straining every nerve, to foster, cherish, ripen, and mature this *promising bud*; and we are happy to find, that the young lady, by her meritorious exertions, renders herself worthy of the gracious patronage she enjoys. So entirely, it seems, did she acquit herself to the Manager's satisfaction, in her late personification of *Venus*, in the pantomime-ballet of *Actæon and Diana*, that the manager, we understand, by way of remuneration for her great deserts, made her a *present of a new gown*! Trifling as this circumstance may appear, *per se*, it acquires importance when connected with collateral events and regulations. A *new gown given* to one actress at the very moment that orders are issued, from authority, for the adoption of a *new system of economy*, by obliging the rest of the female performers to *go dirty*, and wear their dresses *five successive nights*, *without their being washed, instead of three* (as was formerly the practice), may certainly be construed into an infallible proof, that the young lady alluded to has found grace and favour in the sight of *Abasuerus*; and that, however he may lord it over others with a *rod of iron*, to her at least the King holds forth the *golden sceptre*! Whether, indeed, it is the Manager's intention to make any *extra-allowance* to Miss Rein, for the *extra wear and tear* of her dresses, which must naturally be exposed to a greater degree a. violence, and require more scrubbing, wringing, rinsing, &c. to deterge the *extra filth of five, instead of three nights*, is a question altogether problematical.

Note, by the Editor of the Dramatic Censor.

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must read his part, if given on that night. Dr. Arnold and I pressed the manager to postpone the performance ; but in vain. He asserted to me : " *That the Proprietor's* positive orders were, that it should come out on Thursday the 30th, or not at all.*" — Adding, that the performers would be all perfect in their parts for that night ; and he pledged himself to me, that the scenes, dresses, decorations, dance, &c, should be all properly gotten-up.

" I came from this rehearsal very dispirited, and was but little relieved, on my arrival home, from the receipt of a letter, to announce to me, that a party was raised by a vocal performer of Drury-lane, to damn the piece. The letter named the person, as the only one in that theatre, whom the success of it would hurt. I was the more disposed to credit this letter, as the person named in it, Mr. Kelly†, had, in my presence,

* In how far this reference to the *orders of the Proprietors* may be warranted by truth and fact, in the present instance, it is not for us to determine. But that the Manager does not, at all times and seasons, act with the most scrupulous regard to probity, in availing himself of the *authority of the Proprietors*, to shift the responsibility of his deeds from his own shoulders upon those of others-- that he occasionally makes a kind of *stalking-horse* of the Proprietors, to consult his own ease, safety, and convenience, is a charge which we shall shortly bring forward, and substantiate against him, when we proceed to our strictures on his treatment of Mr. Archer.

Notes, by the Editor of the Dramatic Censor.

† There are certain beings in the world, whose success in life is a *moral paradox*, unless, haply, we connect their public pursuits with others of a private and less honourable nature. We know, 'tis true, that very, very little brain, indeed, is requisite to qualify a man for a *crotchet and quaver-monger* ! but by what fatality, a man, with a voice, which partakes alternately of the *croak of a frog, and the squeak of a sow-gelder's horn*, can obtain celebrity as a *singer*--by what fatality a man who cannot pronounce a single sentence with propriety, whose gesticulation is constantly at war with the sentiment, and whose look is a caricature of the part he represents--by what fatality such a man can be tolerated as an *actor* !--these are problems, which well may stagger the speculative enquirer. If the charge here advanced against Mr. Kelly be true (and this is not the first time, by many, that we have heard it brought forward, backed with strong evidence), if the charge be true, we can only say, that while it proves the perverseness of the culprit's heart, it constitutes, at the same time, a general libel on human nature. How is it, that *insignificance* can thus work itself into notice ? How is it, that mankind are thus led by the *nose* ? or rather, with reference to the present subject, by the *ear* ? How is it, that our theatres acknowledge such a

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some time ago, most solemnly protested, "that no musical performance should ever succeed at Drury-lane Theatre, which he did not approve of. And should the proprietors attempt to bring forward any thing of the kind, be siwore by G—d ! that he would hamper them!"

"On Saturday evening, December 7, 1799, I was at Drury-lane Theatre, to see Mr. Lewis's comedy of the *East Indian*, when Mr. Kelly came into the box, and asked me 'when I was to come out?'—I replied, 'I know not.' He then said, 'I had been used very ill, and that it was his opinion the proprietors intended to play me a trick,' and advised me to write them such a letter as 'he should dictate,' to which I purposely avoided making any direct reply.

"On the Tuesday, I waited on Mrs. Mountain, who most generously assured me, that short as the time, and ill as she was, she would risk any thing for the success of the piece, and attend the rehearsal on the next morning, at all hazards. She did attend, and for the cordial and spirited exertion of her admirable powers, on the night of performance, I am happy in an opportunity of paying her my public tribute of gratitude.

rotten dependence, such a disgraceful control? How is it, the Proprietors do not shake off such abject servitude? How is it, they suffer the *arrears of salary* to lay them under the necessity of tamely pocketing insult? How is it, they put it in the power of such a man to thwart, to menace, and to hamper them? With respect to the *executive* part of this business, we must look, if our information be correct, to the *Butchers of Clare Market* for an explanation. With all his faults, we will not so far degrade Mr. Kemble, as to suppose him capable of acting in concert with such confederates.

Note, by the Editor of the Dramatic Censor.

* From this statement, it should appear, that the *impudence* of this man is on a *par* with his *ignorance*. Were it not, that experience furnishes us with daily proofs of the indissoluble union between *imbecility* and *arrogance*, between *vanity* and *folly*, it would scarcely be credited, that such a *skip-jack of talent*, such a *crudity of intellect*, possessed of scarcely a *second idea*, and utterly incapable of *clothing the muddy oozings of his brain* (if he has any) *in words*, should pertly step forward, and *volunteer* his assistance to a lady of literary abilities! that he should kindly offer to *dictate* a letter, forsooth, if the lady would be pleased to perform the office of an *amansuensis* to his mighty *conceptions*!

Note, by the Editor of the Dramatic Censor.

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“ On the Wednesday, when I came to the rehearsal, I had the fresh mortification of hearing that Miss De Camp was confined to her bed, so that the part of *Benowee*, which though not long, I had conceived to be interesting, was *not rehearsed* on that day, which in fact, was the *first rehearsal of the quartets and duets*. Yet I was agreeably surprized at the degree of perfection with which this first rehearsal went off.

“ On this day I was again pressed by the performers to urge the manager to put off the performance. I did apply, and pleaded, *in vain*, the additional reason of Miss De Camp’s illness. However, Miss B. Menage was sent home by the manager to study the part of *Benowee* for the next day.

“ On the day of performance, Miss B. Menage came to rehearse, with every wish and disposition to do justice to the part of *Benowee*. But the want of time to get it up, and the diffidence of a delicate mind, under such circumstances of embarrassment, naturally diminished her powers to perform a part of great exertion.

“ I was now fully convinced of the fate of the piece. Mr. Byrne, the ballet-master, though of extraordinary talents, and uncommonly attentive to his department, had only been spoken to on the preceding Tuesday, to prepare for the dance, procession, pageantry, &c. He had not communicated with me till on Wednesday, when the dance was first rehearsed; but no arrangement appeared to have been made, either according to the music I had composed, or the instructions I had given in. It was, however, then too late to be altered, and I endeavoured to reconcile myself to the disappointment. I admire, notwithstanding, the talent and readiness with which Mr. Byrne got up the dance, that was performed, in so short a time. I very frequently, on this day, spoke to the manager and prompter about the scenes, dresses, decorations, processions, and other necessary arrangements, but was always desired to rest satisfied, and be assured, that whatever I wished and had directed, should be provided for the night’s performance.

“ With respect to the dialogue of the piece, I am still, to this hour, astonished at the alteration that took place in it on the night of performance. I was summoned to attend the reading of the piece, and to the first rehearsal in the green-room, which was no more than an examination of the performers’ different parts with the prompter’s book. At the reading of the piece, the manager very kindly and judiciously suggested to me the alteration of a word or two. I thanked him, and in the presence of all

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the performers, I added, that I should hold myself obliged to him to make any further alterations he found necessary or adviseable.

" I was never more summoned to any rehearsal, but I did occasionally call in whilst rehearsals were going forward, and, I am free to say, that had I been ever so attentive, I could not have followed them so closely, as to be able to hear, much less to judge of the dialogue that some of the performers and the prompter were supposed to rehearse. I felt no uneasiness on that score, *not apprehending that the dialogue was altered*, and having full confidence that the generality of the performers would do every justice that lay in their power to their respective parts.

" I acknowledge the manager did once suggest, that the piece was too long, but he never said another word to me on the subject. The performance of it, however, *with all its interruptions*, on the 30th of October, *in less than three hours*, proves how unnecessary this suggestion was.

" When, therefore, by whom, and why, the different alterations were made in the dialogue, I have still to learn. I knew not, till the night of performance, that they were made; but being so, I have thought it necessary to submit to the public *the whole of the Drama, as I gave it in, and as I expected it would, and intended it should, have been performed*.

" I do it not with a view to support its propriety or excellence; but to shew the public the glaring injustice that was done to the piece, by the unnecessary clippings, and **furtive* deprivation of most of its explanatory and introductory connections. I studiously refrain from any com-

* How the Manager will defend himself against this charge, we are utterly at a loss to conjecture. If such conduct be suffered to pass with impunity, if an author is thus to lie at the mercy of every literary *Procrustes* in office; if a writer is to have his proportions distorted, his limbs lopped, stretched, or twisted, to suit the whim of a stage-tyrant; if his text is to be garbled, mangled, and adulterated, without any communication on the part of the Manager; if *whole scenes* are to be omitted or transposed, as seemeth good to the Manager, without the knowledge and concurrence of the Author; if such a system of procedure be tolerated, there soon must be an end to all dramatic excellence. What writer of repute would submit to such indignities? What drama that ever was, or ever will be, composed by the utmost stretch of human genius, will stand the test of such a *fiery ordeal* as this? What production will bear to be deprived of its connections and dependencies?—Unless, indeed, it be a kind of *Lodoiska puppetshow!*—a kind of *speaking pantomime*!

Note, by the Editor of the Dramatic Censor.

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ment or reflection upon the preparation of the piece for public performance. I leave the naked facts to the judgment and observation of such persons, whom curiosity, interest, or sympathy, may induce to read the following pages.

" I most cordially acknowledge the kind exertions of Messrs. Raymond, Barrymore, Palmer, and Powell, and of Mrs. Sparks, and Miss Tidswell, in their respective parts. I am intimately convinced of the sincere and upright intentions of Mr. Suett to do justice to his part, had he not been prematurely forced upon the boards, so much against his wishes and expectations. Still I am under the necessity of *disclaiming a very great part of what the audience heard from him on that night.*

" My particular acknowledgments are due to Miss Biggs, for her exertions under a most severe indisposition, which rendered her more fit for her bed than the boards:—as also to Mrs. Crouch, Miss Stephens, and Mr. Sedgwick, for the great exertion of their vocal powers on the occasion.

" The like acknowledgments are due to Mr. Shaw, the leader of the band, and to Mr. Walsh, the director of the chorusses, for their minute correctness, and very kind attention to their musical departments, in such an unprecedented shortness of time; as I have understood, that musical first-pieces are *generally rehearsed a dozen, and often a score times before performance.*

" Several circumstances of publicity and notoriety, will afford to the impartial public the sure means of judging, whether or no the condemnation of the piece (independently of its merits or demerits) were, or were not, a premeditated contrivance*?

" *Not one shilling* was expended upon any new scene, dress, or decoration. The play-bills of Wednesday and Thursday were *underlined for the three following nights.* No orders had been given on the eve of the performance, for any one dress; beside the want of instructions and

* " A person in the boxes observed, that the two first acts had gone over very smoothly, and that he presumed the whole would go off with equal success. The gentleman to whom the observation was made, replied, that *the piece would notwithstanding be certainly damned in the third act;* that he had it from the highest authority: for Mr. Kelly had assured him on that very morning, that the "*third act would never be permitted to go down!*"

orders to the ballet-master, no provision whatever was made for the marches and processions, for which the author had given the most minute directions ; and yet the music intended for them was permitted to be played†. Most important alterations in the dialogue were made, without the privity of the author ; and the manager assured the audience, that HE had exerted his *best endeavours* for the success of the piece.”

From this narrative, involving a dispassionate statement of facts, the following circumstances are particularly entitled to notice. In the first place, it appears not a little singular, that an opera, *presented* to the Proprietors on the 1st of January, 1799, and *accepted* on the 17th of July of the same year, should be suffered to lie dormant upwards of fifteen months, and then be suddenly brought forward with such marvellous precipitancy, as not to admit of more than three days’ rehearsal, previous to the representation ! Not less marvellous is it, that the indisposition of two of the principal performers could not obtain the further postponement, *for a few days only*, of an opera which had lain on hand the *greatest part of two years* ! Happily, the Manager had been *star-gazing* ! haply, he had consulted some celebrated wizard, necromancer, or astrologer ; and learnt tidings from the sky, that, of all nights in the year, the night of the 30th of October was the only fitting time and season for the production of this long procrastinated opera ! Yet, with all his faith in divination, would he have consented to have brought forward his own grand *narcotic*, yclep’d *De Montfort*, with which he *dozed* the town last season, under similar circumstances ?

Further, it appears—and disgraceful is it alike to the Proprietors and to the Manager, that such a circumstance should

† “ Dr. Arnold and I repeatedly pressed the Prompter to permit the marches and processions to be rehearsed, in order to know, whether the music suited ;—and we were always assured, ‘ that they were all arranged in proper order, to suit with the music.’ ”

appear—it appears, that the actual control of the theatre (at least in the musical department) rests with the *Sublime Mufti*, Mr. Kelly; that not *King John*, but *St. Michael*, possesses the *power of the keys*, and that this is the grand *Hierarch*, who “openeth, and no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no man openeth!” and who can *hamper* the Proprietors themselves, if they dare to introduce a professional person within the *sanc-tuary of Drury-Lane*, without his previous approbation and permission. Hence, it should seem that the public ear is never to be regaled with any concord of sweet sounds, except the echoes of *Tink-a-tink Hall!*

Again, it appears, that an author is no longer to be consulted, as formerly, on the subject of any alterations that propriety or expediency may suggest in his manuscript. His production is to be torn to pieces, limb by limb, without any previous notice; nay, he is not even to have the melancholy satisfaction of knowing the extent of the experiments the Manager intends to make on the body of his work—but must prepare himself to see his dramatic bantling brought forward in such a state of mutilation and disguise, that it is impossible for him to recognize his own offspring. Surely, this is refining on the *Procrustean* system with a vengeance! this completely *out-Herods Herod*, and may be considered as emblematic of the massacre of the *Holy Innocents*!

It appears likewise, that the new Manager, no doubt, from the laudable wish of restoring the habits of *sincerity and plain-dealing*, has determined to banish from his practice all the customary forms of civility and common politeness. He receives a written note from the Composer, that there are two days in the week (Mondays and Thursdays) when his avocations render it inconvenient for him to attend the musical rehearsals. By way of reply, he orders the first rehearsal

to take place on the first of those two days stated by the Composer to be days on which he cannot possibly be present; and peremptorily fixes the second day (*Thursday*) for the representation of the opera. To all remonstrances he turns a deaf ear—the lady petitions—the Composer pleads, in vain. Wrapt up in all the gloom of mock majesty, he fancies himself monarch of the universe, his *fiat*, once issued, is irreversible, and, like the edicts of the Medes and Persians, cannot be revoked.

" King John,
 On his throne,
 With his nods,
 Men and gods
 Keeps in awe !
 When he winks,
 Heaven shrinks !
 When he speaks,
 Hell squeaks ;
 Drury-Lane is but his taw !
 Cock of the school,
 He bears despotic rule ;
 His word,
 Though absurd,
 Is both Gospel and Law ! "

MIDAS.

It appears, finally, from the foregoing statement, that a full piece, the production of a lady of talent and of fashion, and, from her sex, as well as from her situation in life, entitled to some deference, is brought forward, with less attention to the necessary arrangements, with less preparation and solicitude, on the part of the Manager, than are wont to be bestowed on the most trifling and despicable afterpiece. Applications and remonstrances are treated with the most sovereign contempt; the only answer the authoress can obtain to her repeated enquiries, is the precise answer with which

adults

adults resist the importunities of children—she is “*desired to rest satisfied, and be assured, that all shall be done as it ought to be!*”

In bringing this statement of her case before the public, Mrs. Plowden has done an essential service to the Thespian community. She has opened the eyes of the public to a system of managerial oppression, which calls loudly for interference and redress; and, as such, she is entitled to the thanks of all the votaries of the Dramatic Muse. The sycophants of Managers may, indeed, object to this language, and, in the *polite* language of the Editor of the *Oracle*, whose *gallantry* keeps pace with the elegance of his phraseology, call upon her “*to hold her jaw!*” (See *Oracle* of the 20th of November). But the candid part of the theatrical world will rejoice at the weight which the sanction of her precedent gives to this mode of appeal.

As a detail of the plot of a condemned opera would be altogether nugatory, we shall conclude our remarks upon *Virginia*, with the following specimen of the songs, from Scene III. of the first Act, which, if we mistake not, was *totally omitted in the representation!*

What's this fearful agitation?

Why this trembling through my frame?

Whence at heart this palpitation?

Did it always beat the same?

Ne'er before this flutt'ring motion,

Felt I trouble in my breast!

Now 'tis like the ruffled ocean!

What has robb'd me of my rest?

What can mean this strange confusion?

Of alarm, of joy, and pain?

'Tis a dream, 'tis all delusion—

Speak, my heart!—I ask in vain.

What

What, but Love, could thus assail me?
From my heart, 'tis Love I learn,
Ev'ry hope, nay, life, will fail me,
Should I love without return!

In the entertainment of *The Citizen*, which succeeded Mrs. Plowden's opera, a Mr. Purser came forward, as a candidate for Thespian fame, in the character of *Old Philpot*. To give an exact delineation of *old age*, or rather of *actual dotage and decrepitude*, would be a task not of easy achievement, even to a *practised* performer, whose years exhibit such a striking contrast to the part he personates, as Mr. Purser's do to the supposed *antiquity* of the hoary Jletcher, he this night represented. Great indulgence, therefore, may be justly claimed for the *maiden effay* of a youth, not yet out of his *teens*, in a part of this description. In his general outline, Mr. Pursur was very happy; and, though *nature* would at times triumph over *art*, and the altered tone of voice occasionally betrayed the *juvenility* of the actor, there were many *traits* in his performance, which evinced improveable ability. There are many actors on the boards, who, in our humble opinion, possess less natural talent, and we make no doubt, but time and practice, will render Mr. Purser a respectable third or second-rate comedian.— Miss Mellon sustained the varied and eccentric character of *Maria*.

N. B. We must this month make a strong appeal to the indulgence of our readers, for the procrastination of so large a proportion of our *Theatrical Report*, together with our customary abstract of *Fashionables*, &c. But the importance of the annexed Letter to *Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Esq.* on the proceedings of the *New Manager*, and the impossibility of postponing a discussion of such immediate necessity, will, we trust, prove an ample apology for our conduct in this respect.

A LETTER

A LETTER

TO

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN, ESQ.

ON THE CONDUCT AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE NEW MANAGER
OF DRURY-LANE THEATRE.By the *Editor of the Dramatic Censor.*

“ If the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet ; and the people be not warned ; if the sword come, and take any person from among them ; he is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at the watchman’s hand.

“ But if thou warn the wicked of his way, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul.”—*EZEKIEL.*

SIR,

TO what extent you may have parted with, or may still retain in your own hands, the control and supremacy of the internal economy of the Theatre-Royal, Drury-lane, is a question which the writer of this Epistle candidly avows himself incompetent to resolve. But as your name still continues *at the head of the firm* ; as you still continue the *ostensible leading proprietor* of the establishment, the public are warranted in attaching to the *honor*, the *responsibility* likewise of the situation you hold. They are warranted in holding you, as *principal*, accountable for the acts of the *agent* ; and when the *manager* who is but a *servant* of the public, higher in office, indeed, than the rest of the performers, but only for *that* reason higher, only for *that* reason more exalted, than his companions, that the purposes of the institution may be more successfully answered to the satisfaction of *that* public, on whose patronage and support the very existence of the institution depends—when the *manager* loses sight

sight of his duty ; when the *vile leaven of self* supersedes the sense of *public obligation* ; when, instead of balancing *private* against *public* claims, he appears to refer the power derivable from his office, solely to the accomplishment of his own views, to the gratification of his own spleen, or the promotion of his own interest ; when such motives appear to actuate ; when such appears to be the system of the manager ; the public have an undoubted right to enter their protest against measures, which, if persisted in, must defeat the purposes of the institution, and eventually involve the Theatre in inextricable embarrassments, till it presents one unvaried scene of anarchy, discord, and confusion.

That the proprietors of a theatre, and the public at large are not *isolated* beings ; that a *reciprocity* of interest exists between them ; that a kind of *mutual*, though *tacit*, compact binds the parties to each other ; that the proprietors are amenable to public opinion ; and that respect, deference, and submission are due, from the proprietors, to that public opinion, when duly declared and clearly ascertained—these, Sir, I conceive to be *axioms* of theatrical jurisprudence, which no liberal mind, and least of all yourself, I am persuaded, will feel inclined to controvert. But how ? by what means ? through what channel ? is that public opinion to be conveyed, promulgated, and ascertained ? The answer is obvious and at hand—through the medium of *public criticism* ; through the vehicle of the *press* ; through the *agency* of those, who, from chance or choice, are in the habit of reporting the proceedings and history of the stage. In their *corporate capacity*, as a *body congregate*—as a *noun of multitude*, great inconvenience would attend the promulgation of public opinion. It never can be the wish of any friend to the theatre, least of all can it be the wish or interest of the proprietors of the theatre, that

this

this public opinion should be given *collectively*! that it should swell upon the ear, as the voice of a *great multitude*!—as the voice of *many waters*!—and as the voice of *mighty thunders*!—such a mode of *declaration* would bear too close an affinity, both in manner and effect, to the awful presage of subterranean explosion—to the dreadful symptoms of volcanic eruption—it would resemble too closely the ominous precursor of a tropical tornado—it would be the signal to ruin, havoc, and destruction!

Hence, then, it results, that a theatrical *critic* is authorized, is justified, nay, more, is peremptorily called upon by the duties of his function, to give warning, not merely of *actual* and *impending*, but of *probable danger*. 'Tis his duty to *forebode the storm*—to *nip mischief in the bud*. So far from acting the part of an *incendiary*, by exposing *incipient* abuses; by resisting the *first advances* of wrong; by laying bare the sore, before it converts into a gangrene—he approves himself as the best friend and advocate of the theatre, and renders himself supereminently entitled to the thanks of the proprietors, by calling their attention to disguised and latent jeopardy; by putting them upon their guard against accruing ill, and giving them an opportunity of checking offence, before it acquires strength and daring to defy their control. He but discharges the office of a conscientious watchman; whether those to whom he directs his warning voice choose to profit from it—whether they take it in good or in evil part, rests entirely with themselves—in giving that warning, he evinces his integrity, and, by so doing, in the language of the motto to this epistle, delivers his own soul.

Thus circumstanced, Sir, with respect to his motives and principle of action, is the writer who now addresses you on a subject, of all others, the most intimately connected

with the tranquility and prosperity of a theatre—to wit, *the conduct of the manager!* He is not a person, whose disposition leads him to throw obstacles in the way of government, or to clog the wheels of theatrical administration. On the contrary, he has, *in the day of trial*, approved himself as the strenuous champion of rule and order, and exerted himself with most conspicuous activity in supporting the invaded rights of just authority. But, though the advocate of legitimate government, he is not the *tool of power*—When he sees *abuse* coupled with *command*—when he sees the *faculty* converted into the *privilege* of doing wrong—and *might* substituted for *right* ;—when enormities of this nature present themselves to his view, he cannot, in justice to his own character, remain silent. Then, as an honest man, he feels it incumbent upon him, to denounce malefaction, and to undertake the cause of the oppressed.

Further, he has to observe, that in canvassing the conduct of the new manager, he stands acquitted and exempt from the bare suspicion of sinister views. In his professional character, as an actor of first-rate abilities, as a man possessed of extraordinary intellectual powers, no person entertains a higher opinion of Mr. Kemble, a greater degree of veneration and esteem for his talents, than does the Editor of the DRAMATIC CENSOR. Of this he has given convincing proofs by his public testimony, whenever Mr. Kemble's performances constituted the theme of discussion ; nor will Mr. Kemble's *managerial* conduct, however faulty, erroneous, and even criminal, in any instance, interfere with the tribute due to his professional merit. Mr. Kemble's actions *before* the curtain, and *behind* it, are distinct and separate topics ; and as such, they will continue to be treated by the writer of this epistle,

Again,

Again, it ought to be considered, that no sordid, base, and mercenary views can be imputed to the man, who volunteers the cause of the *poor* against the *rich*; the *weak* against the *powerful*; the *outs* against the *ins*; the defenceless *victim* of oppression against his potent and vindictive *persecutor*! Sceptical as is the age, and little disposed to give a writer credit for purity of intention; in the present case it would puzzle the ingenuity of malice itself to connect such a system of procedure with mean and unworthy motives. Yet, haply, this may be presuming too far on the strength of conscious integrity. There are beings so totally lost to every virtuous emotion themselves, that they cannot attach belief to the existence of moral goodness in others. Like the spider, these venomous reptiles extract poison from the same source, whence the bee culls nectareous sweets. They experience a malicious, fiendlike joy in traducing excellence, and are ever eager to degrade the rest of mankind to their own vile level. Beings of this class will scarcely fail to discover some latent *bye-view* in the line of conduct pursued on the present occasion by the writer of this letter. As they cannot accuse him of being suborned to support the cause of wealth and power, they will, no doubt, shift their ground, and attribute his proceedings to a wish to catch at popularity. But they are welcome to indulge their depraved appetite, to banquet on the sour leaven of their own rancour, and to re-imbibe the leprous distillation of their own corrupted hearts.

To no person did the projected change in the management of Drury-lane theatre afford greater satisfaction than to the Editor of the DRAMATIC CENSOR. It was a change to which he looked forward with expectations the most sanguine, and when the final adjustment of the business was officially announced in the play-bills and the public prints—he

hailed this event as the certain presage of a felicitous theatrical campaign. Impressed with an adequate sense of Mr. Kemble's capability for the office, he fondly anticipated the most momentous and beneficial consequences from his managerial councils. He looked forward to a reformation of the Stage; to the restoration of legitimate drama — to the re-establishment of the empire of reason and of sense.

In how far these expectations have been verified, is not now the subject of enquiry. The present discussion involves rather a scrutiny into Mr. Kemble's government *behind* the curtain, than an investigation of his *public acts*. 'Tis his conduct towards the performers that now calls for investigation — 'tis on a charge of abuse of authority and power, that he now stands indicted and arraigned.

From what has been already premised, it must most obviously appear, that no prejudices, inimical to Mr. Kemble, possessed the writer's mind, at the time that gentleman was invested with the badge and sceptre of command. On the contrary, he ascended the managerial throne, with a strong prepossession, on my part, in his favour. I felt disposed to give him credit for purity of will, and correspondent faculty of performance. Not many weeks, however, elapsed, before I found my faith in his fitness and qualification begin to stagger. I fancied to discover in his conduct, indications of a *crooked* mind. Reports reached my ear of transactions, which betrayed an equal mixture of pusillanimity and tergiversation. For a long time I struggled with conviction — I did not accord easy faith to rumours injurious to the manager. But — "*proof rising upon proof, and still the last the strongest!*" — I was compelled to yield to the evidence of facts, and with regret found myself under the necessity

cessity of withdrawing the *unlimited* confidence I had placed in the New Monarch.

I now began to watch his actions more attentively—at least to watch him with an eye of greater scrutiny, and with less reliance on his consummate rectitude and wisdom. The result of the examination was a persuasion, that the manager stood in the precise predicament with the major bulk of mankind. There are thousands, who acquit themselves with credit, and even acquire superlative praise in inferior situations, but who forfeit all their pretensions, and tarnish their laurels, when elevated to a post of supreme command. Then they exemplify a mournful, but approved truth, that greatness is a dangerous and precarious post,

—“ Which sets man up to view,
“ And shows him in the fairest point of light,
“ To make his virtues, or his faults conspicuous !”

CATO.

With extreme compunction, I now yielded to the impulse of duty, and animadverted with the utmost delicacy which the nature of the case would admit of, on certain instances of abuse and undue partiality, too flagrant to be longer passed over in silence. Yet, previous to taking even this *preliminary* step, I imparted my intentions to a particular friend of the manager, who is understood to have complete possession of his ear, and to be continually at his elbow, for the express purpose of affording the manager an opportunity of justification. Not receiving any satisfactory explanation, I stated the particulars in print, but still with all the delicacy and forbearance compatible with the circumstances of the case.

This procedure brought on, in the first place, an insidious attack in the *True Briton*, to which I paid no more heed than

than it deserved—and, secondly, a visit from Mr. Powell, the gentleman more immediately alluded to in my Publication. Mr. Powell waited upon me, at the express desire and requisition of the manager, to place the conduct of the latter, relative to himself, in a proper light, and point of view.—I was happy to find, from his statement, that Mr. Kemble was not *quite* so culpable as I imagined. But the explanation was not altogether satisfactory, either to Mr. Powell's feelings or my own—It appeared, that Mr. Powell, who is truly, what it *suitèd* the theatrical critic of the *True Briton* to represent him—a “*modest, unassuming character*”—had applied to the manager for a renewal of his articles; at the same time expressing a wish, perfectly regular, and consistent with the most rigid rules of delicacy and honour, to succeed to a certain line of parts, avowedly *vacant*, in consequence of Mr. Aickin's *secession* from the stage, and for which no fairer claimant then appeared—no idea being entertained of there-engagement of Mr. Wroughton. But, in applying for a more suitable line of business, for an additional cast of characters, Mr. Powell, as he very judiciously observed to me, did not bargain to surrender and forego the cast of parts he already held by legitimate tenure. He made no stipulation with the manager to abet his bare-faced system of *Nepotismus*, by resigning the parts of *Captain Absolute*, in *The Rivals*, and *Charles*, in the *School for Scandal*, in favour of Mr. Kemble's younger brother. Still less did he design to purchase the manager's compliance with his request, by submitting to marked and wanton *degradation*! or to *swell the triumph of the family*, by demeaning himself to play the part of *Chicane*, in the *Agreeable Surprise*, to Mrs. Stephen Kemble's *Cowslip*.

As

As the discussion of this topic naturally induces the mention of the deprivation and disposal of characters, from one actor to another, it may not be improper to remark, that even in cases, where just and competent reason can be assigned, on the part of the manager, for such a procedure, there is a mode of effecting this point, which, in a great measure, takes away from the odium and provocation of the transaction. A delicate mind will instinctively feel the necessity of palliating the *deed*, by the *manner*. The *suaviter in modo*, so strongly urged by Lord Chesterfield, in his Letters to his Son, was never more essentially requisite than in cases of this nature. Written notice should be sent to the party, couched in soothing terms to appease the feelings, too liable from the act itself to irritation. But to preach up delicacy to Kemble, if we may judge from the general tenor of his conduct in this particular, is a vain and fruitless attempt. That delicate reluctance to wound the feelings of others, which governs the conduct of refined minds, appears to be a principle of action, foreign, if not to the *comprehension*, at least to the **practice* of the new manager.

* Witness his late behaviour to Mr. Cory. That gentleman, after twice rehearsing the part of *Glenalvon*, in *Douglas* (a part, by the bye, which he has been in the habit of playing for these two years past) had the mortification to see his name struck out of the bills on the day of performance, without any previous intimation; and the part conferred on another actor, already overloaded with business, who has not appeared in the character for upwards of these ten years, Mr. Cory very properly resented such ungentlemanlike behaviour, and demanded an explanation from the manager. They met in the prompter's room—Mr. Kemble, big with the consequence of office, assumed a high and imperious tone; but he was soon given to understand, that the power to injure does not carry with it the privilege to offer insult with impunity.

On

On this theme we might enlarge to considerable extent, and yet not tell the *tythe-part* of his guilt ; but a case of infinitely greater turpitude—a case of deeper, and, beyond parallel, more heinous atrocity, swallows up, like Aaron's serpent, the swarm of minor offences, and calls for immediate castigation. In point of time, it takes the lead of all the manager's misdeeds, and most sincerely do we hope, for the sake of his own character and future peace of mind, that it takes the lead likewise, in point of enormity.

The Theatre-Royal, Drury-lane, opened, for the present season, as our readers will remember, on Tuesday, the 16th of September. The Friday, preceding the opening, Mr. Archer, manager of the Brighton theatre, received a letter, from the prompter, or rather, only a *share* of a letter (for it was addressed to Mr. Wewitzer, with especial directions to apprise Mr. Archer of the contents, and to *make him pay half the postage !* so economically do they manage matters at Drury-lane !) informing him of the day fixed by the proprietors for the commencement of the theatrical campaign ; but making no mention (probably, because that was a point as yet unsettled, the arrangements relative to the management not being finally adjusted) of the play with which it was intended to open. Mr. Archer arrived in town on Monday evening, and was not a little surprised, as well indeed he might be, to find his name announced in the bills for *Laertes*, in the tragedy of *Hamlet*, a part in which he had never appeared before, and of which, therefore, by the standing rules of the theatre he ought to have received *official* notice : no performer being bound to undertake a *new* part, without previous notice, for this obvious reason, that he may have time to study the character.

In

In this dilemma, Mr. Archer applied directly to the prompter, and stated his incapacity to perform the part.—The only step that could now be taken was to provide a substitute. Unwilling to lose a moment's time, Mr. Archer hired a hackney coach, and posted to the Hay-Market Theatre, then open for the benefit of Mr. Waldron. Here he met Mr. J. Palmer, who had frequently sustained the character of *Laertes*, on the Hay-Market stage, and who readily consented, at his request, to undertake the part on the Drury-lane boards. Immediate information was given to the prompter, and Mr. Archer suggested the expediency of calling on the manager; but Mr. Kemble having left the Theatre, and the evening being far advanced, the prompter did not think it necessary.

Having thus, as he considered, in every respect discharged his duty to the Theatre—having come to town in time for the opening—having procured a *substitute* for a part, which he would have been proud to have *sustained himself*, had timely notice been given him of his being cast for the character—having satisfied every claim upon *himself*, and obviated the inconveniences resulting from the *remissness of others*—Mr. Archer, early the following morning, set off for Brighton, where he played *Biron* the same evening, to Mrs. Siddons's *Isabella*, in the *Fatal Marriage*.

Scarcely, however, had Mr. Archer surmounted the difficulty with respect to *Laertes*, before a fresh snare was laid to entrap him. No sooner was it known to the manager, that Mr. Archer had procured a substitute for *Laertes*, than, determined to *hamper* him, (to adopt the elegant phraseology of Mr. Kelly) he put down his name in the bills of the *next morning*, for *Bernardo*. Here, Sir, I must beg leave to call your particular attention to two principal points.

Independent of the *irregularity* of the proceeding, which a gentleman so deeply interested in the Theatre as yourself and so thoroughly versed in its laws and usages, cannot, I am persuaded, but most decidedly condemn and reprobate, as an infallible evidence of a malicious design—Independent of the *irregularity* of the proceeding—the manager, by putting down Mr. Archer's name for *Bernardo*, again trespassed on the laws of the theatre, and rendered *himself*, or his *agent*, which is tantamount, for the deed of the *agent* involves the *principal*—a second time guilty of an act of *remissness*, by a second time casting Mr. Archer for a *part he had never played before*, without giving him previous notice! Thus we see the manager *outwitted by his own guile!* We see *Hamlet*, instead of *Laertes* “*a woodcock to his own springe!*” and *defeated by his own treachery!*

Again, I have to observe, in justification of Mr. Archer and in aggravation of the manager's malignancy, that the part of *Bernardo* was filled up in the bills of Monday morning, with Mr. Wentworth's name—Mr. Archer, therefore, by theatrical usage and prescription, was not bound to wait in expectation of every possible contingency—he was not compellable, even if he had been in town on the Tuesday morning, to act as a *scape-goat* to another, and, to take a new part for that self-same day! Performers have in these cases, and very justly, the right of option—It rests with them to consent or to refuse. Were the case otherwise, the profession of an actor, especially under the control of a despotic manager, would indeed be worse than the situation of a *galley-slave!*

The day following [Wednesday,] Mr. Archer returned to town, and that self-same day, the following letter, containing a *formal discharge*, was dispatched to him at Brigh-

ton,

ton, from which place it was forwarded back to Mr. Archer, in London.

Theatre Royal, Drury-lane, Wednesday Sept. 17, 1800.

SIR,

Your absence from the theatre, when you were particularly wanted, on the night of opening, on which evening your name was advertised for a part in *Hamlet*, obliges the proprietors to desire, that you will not give yourself the trouble of coming to London, as they have found themselves under the necessity of engaging another person in your place.

I am, Sir,

Your very humble servant,

W. POWELL, Prompter.

To Mr. ARCHER.

Were it my sole object to prove and substantiate that the conduct of the manager, throughout the whole of this iniquitous transaction, has been the result of a predetermined plan, to ruin Mr. Archer, and to eject him from his situation in the theatre, I might leave this letter to speak for itself. But I have a further hold upon him—there is a *sting in the tail* of this business, for which the manager is not prepared, but which will fasten upon him with a barbed and damning thrust! *The Devil sometimes overshoots his mark!*—I shall show him, that he has entailed upon himself all the odium and infamy of oppression, without reaping the fruits he promised himself from his nefarious conduct.

The receipt of this letter naturally filled Mr. Archer's mind with trepidation and alarm. He took the earliest opportunity of waiting upon the Manager, who assured him, that *it was not his act and deed, but proceeded entirely from the proprietors*—that he hoped Mr. Archer would not attribute it to him—and he even promised Mr. Archer, that he would exert his interest and good offices with the proprietors, to accommodate the business.

From

From these friendly assurances, Mr. Archer entertained some hopes of redress; little aware of the convenient use the manager makes of the name and authority of the proprietors—little aware of the palpable *fraud* and *duplicity*, which to a *shrewd* and *quick-discerning* mind, must appear on the very face of the business—little aware, how impossible it was for the proprietors, who *were both of them out of town*, the one at the distance of upwards of *a hundred*, the other of between *sixty and seventy miles!*—to issue orders for the discharge of a performer on *Wednesday*, in consequence of what occurred on the evening of the preceding *Tuesday*—and of which they could not even have received intelligence, by post, at the time that the letter pretending to come by their instruction was written.

In a state of painful suspense, balanced between hopes and fears, Mr. Archer continued till Tuesday, Sep. 23. In the course of that day, he went behind the scenes of Drury-lane theatre, to watch an opportunity of speaking with Mr. Kemble. The manager caught his eye, but eluded his vigilance among the windings and intricacies of the place, and repairing to the prompter, dictated the following letter:

Theatre Royal, Drury-lane, Tuesday, Sept. 23, 1806.

SIR,

The proprietors desire me to inform you, that they are sorry for the occasion of it, but your situation in the theatre is **filled*, and it is not in their power to alter their determination.

I am, Sir,

Your very humble servant,

To Mr. ARCHER.

W. POWELL, Prompter.

With the receipt of this epistle vanished all Mr. Archer's hopes of redress. By an act of managerial violence (of

* *Quere.*—By whom? What new engagement have they made, in consequence of Mr. Archer's absence on the opening night?

which,

which, for the honor of that office, we hope there are few precedents) by the most arbitrary stretch of power, he saw himself with a wife and three children thrown out of employment, at a moment's warning, and deprived of the means of providing for his family in times of peculiar pressure and distress.

Distant and imperfect representations of Mr. Archer's case had been made to me, soon after the transaction took place; but I was not put in complete possession of the facts till the beginning of November. In consequence of the animadversions which I threw out in the last number of the DRAMATIC CENSOR, on the manager's conduct, a correspondence took place between me and that gentleman. Several interviews likewise happened, on which occasions the manager was always *attended* by his *fidus Achates*, Mr. Taylor. I will not disguise that I had hopes of exciting the manager's commisseration, in favour of Mr. Archer and his distressed family—but I soon found that I had to deal with a man, whose bowels never yearned for human woe, whose heart never was warmed with the milk of human kindness. At first, the manager seemed to aim at carrying it with a high and lordly hand. He denied the control of public opinion, and very emphatically observed, that the public had no more right to call a manager to account for *discharging a performer*, than they would have to call men to account for *parting with a servant-maid*, for stopping out all night, and getting drunk. This truly *Kemblean* doctrine roused my indignation—I observed, that on these principles, I could discover no good that could possibly result from our conference, and, therefore, the sooner it was terminated, the better. The manager waved the *obnoxious* preliminary, and entered into a statement of particulars.

I at once perceived, that artifice and dissimulation were requisite, on my part, as the only chance I had of accomplishing my object of obtaining *proofs of the manager's misconduct, from his own evidence.* I accordingly so deeply disguised my real sentiments, and clothed my enquiries and replies, in such a dark veil of sophistry, that both the manager and his friend gave into my toils, and departed fully persuaded, that I was as completely satisfied of the manager's innocence and rectitude, as that gentleman wished me to be. In one instance, indeed, he eluded the snare I had prepared for him. I was in hopes of convicting him too of fraud and duplicity, to his very teeth, with respect to his promised interposition and good offices with the proprietors, for Mr. Archer's restoration. But his conscience stood his friend—and saved him from the exposure which I meditated. He expressly avowed, that Mr. Archer's discharge was his *own immediate act*—and that he took the whole responsibility of the deed upon himself.

On Thursday the 13th Inst. I received the following letter from the manager :

Theatre Royal, Drury-lane, Thursday evening.

My dear SIR,

I find, that I have not been quite accurate in what I said relative to Mr. Archer's going out of town. With your leave, I will call upon you tomorrow at three o'clock, with Mr. Powell (*the Prompter*) who recollects all the circumstades of that affair better than I did.

Yours truly,

I. P. KEMBLE.

From this note, I felt induced to hope, that the manager had enquired into the circumstances of Mr. Archer's case, and that certain facts had transpired favourable to that gentleman's future prospects. Mr. Archer called upon me in the

course

course of the morning, and at my request, restated such particulars, concerning which I thought it of consequence to be correctly and minutely informed. I felt averse to the idea of entering into a course of expostulation with the manager, in the presence of the prompter, and therefore, from a delicate reluctance to wound the feelings, or derogate from the dignity of the manager, put down in writing those points, on which I was desirous of obtaining a more complete and satisfactory explanation.

At the time appointed, the manager made his appearance, again escorted by Mr. Taylor, and accompanied not only by the prompter, but by Mr. Stokes, the head copyist of the theatre. I was all expectation to learn the purport of this grand embassy. But how shall I express my astonishment, when I found that the whole object of this mission was to prove that a performer who did not arrive in town till Monday evening, was not present at the rehearsal on Monday morning! I confess, it was with difficulty that I could retain possession of my patience. However, I still continued to dissemble—and to cut the matter short—for I felt heartily disgusted with the whole proceedings of the manager—declared—that *I had no further enquiries to make—that I was perfectly satisfied*—and wished to drop the subject. We parted soon after, the manager hugging himself in fancied security, and lulling himself to rest, in the blind confidence, that I was on his side.

My positive, final determination was now taken. I resolved to make no more appeals to the manager, but to bring the whole of Mr. Archer's case fairly and explicitly before the public. However, that the manager might not complain, that I had taken him by surprize, I addressed the following letter,

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letter, announcing my irrevocable determination to one of his most intimate friends and partizans.

SIR,

HAVING, in the dispute between Mr. Archer and Mr. Kemble, scrupulously adhered to the maxim you have so frequently urged, viz. to hear both sides of the question before I form a decisive opinion—having heard Mr. Archer in crimination of the manager, and Mr. Kemble in vindication of his own conduct—I have to observe that the result of the enquiry, as it operates upon my mind, is a firm conviction of Mr. Kemble's guilt. Every attempt at exculpation has only added to the mass of evidence against him. His subterfuges, his evasions, the agonizing dread with which he shrank back from those points, which alone can ascertain where the fault actually lies, and where, of course, the punishment ought to attach—all these circumstances are damning indications of a soul, conscious of delinquency, and anxious to cloak that delinquency from the scrutinizing eye of justice.

This broad accusation on my part will, doubtless, fill you with surprize, as I am persuaded, from the general tenor of our conversation on the subject, that you flattered yourself I was completely on the side of the manager. But permit me to remark, that a prudent general adapts his tactics to the existing circumstances of the war. When, therefore, in reply to the *wretched quibble*, by which the evidence of Messrs. Stokes and Powell was twisted into a demonstration, that Mr. Kemble's *sagacity* outran Mr. Archer's *solicitude* to procure a substitute for the part of *Laertes*, by the space of *nearly a whole half hour!*—when, I say, in reply to this quibble, I declared myself “perfectly satisfied” my answer carried

ried with it more of meaning than met the ear. Contending with an avowed jesuit, I fought him at his own weapons of dissimulation, and, in the true spirit of jesuitism, *fas est et ab hoste doceri.*" I kept a *mental reservation*. Yes, truly, I was satisfied I satisfied, indeed!—satisfied that Mr. Archer had no redress to hope, either from the justice or humanity of his oppressor. I was satisfied that he had to contend with a man, whose brain is intoxicated with the gratified lust of power, and whose heart is steeled against the sympathies of nature.

These are not merely my own sentiments, my own feelings on the case. I share them in common with every intelligent person, with whom I have conversed upon the subject, and who has enquired into the affair. Yes, Sir, I speak strictly within compass, when I affirm, that Mr. Kemble's treatment of Mr. Archer has excited general execration. One gentleman in particular, a literary character, well known to Mr. Kemble and yourself, thoroughly informed on all theatrical topics, and who entertains the highest esteem for the manager, declared to me with vehemence, that he never, in the whole course of his observation, had met with a case of greater malignity, *foulness* (I quote his exact words) and rank injustice. He declared to me, that Mr. Kemble's conduct, throughout the whole of the business, from first to last, was not only a mean cowardly artifice to gratify a rankling spite, but that it was, at the same time, *irregular, contrary to all the rules of the theatre, and not less impolitic than execrable*. I might enlarge on this head, *ad infinitum*, would time permit; but a more effectual opportunity of exposure will speedily offer.

Under

“ Under these circumstances, you cannot wonder that I announce to you my determination of bringing the whole of the case before the public. When I reflect on the conspicuous part I took in resisting the faction of the eight *performers* at Covent Garden Theatre, I feel myself imperiously called upon to vindicate my own character for integrity, by as decidedly resisting the tyranny of *managers*, when they overstep the bounds of right. 'Tis an act of justice, which I owe to my own reputation and peace of mind—and no power that sways the will of man shall bend me from it.

I am aware, that in so doing, I not only irretrievably forfeit the good will of the manager; but that I shall draw down upon my devoted head his direst vengeance. Be it so! I am prepared to meet his vengeance in every form and shape. As the sincere friend of Mr. Kemble—as a man, who entertains the profoundest veneration and esteem for his transcendent abilities, it cuts me to the heart to take up arms against him. But the love of justice and of truth absorbs with me all *personal* considerations. However, I may grieve for Mr. Kemble, as an *individual*, I shall in the more expanded character of a *philanthropist*—as the general friend of *all* mankind, but more immediately of the *oppressed*, exult in the oppressor's pangs, and glory in his downfall.

“ The present epistle is not intended as an overture for fresh *negociations*—but as a *declaration of hostilities*—as a *manifesto of war*. With Mr. Kemble, in his *private* capacity I have nothing more to do—I make no more appeals to his justice or his pity. I have found his heart obdurate and jealous—hard as the nethermost mill-stone! as flint!—as rock! as adamant!—I appeal, therefore, from *Kemble* to *Cæsar*.

Cæsar. I appeal from the *Manager* to the sovereignty of the public voice ; and I believe you are aware, 'tis not my practice to *do things by halves*. I am prepared for extremities. When justice calls upon me—so *Utopian* * are my ideas—I could bare my breast to *Shylock*'s knife, and sacrifice existence even for a stranger."

The remainder of this letter referred to certain private transactions between the writer and the party to whom it was addressed, and therefore is omitted as foreign to the immediate object of discussion.

I have already remarked, that there are certain circumstances, connected with the measures pursued by the manager to injure Mr. Archer, which *carry a sting in their tail*, of which the manager does not seem to be duly aware. The limits, to which this letter has already extended, will not permit, Sir, of my entering into a *detailed* explanation at present. I shall, therefore, defer this part of my statement till the next number, and mean while beg leave to remind the manager, that there are certain laws and usages, by which the conduct of proprietors and managers towards their performers, with respect to fines, penalties, and discharges must necessarily be regulated. He will there find, that the penalty incurred by a performer, for absenting himself from rehearsal, is not a

* This refers to a circumstance that occurred in the course of the interviews which took place between Mr. Kemble, and the Editor of the *Dramatic Censor*, when the Manager observed, that Mr. Dutton appeared to entertain exaggerated and *Utopian* ideas of justice and philanthropy, and in this view conferred upon him the appellation of *Sir Thomas Moore*.

discharge

discharge but a *fine* — that the penalty for non-attendance on a night of performance is not a *discharge*, but a *fine*. And further, for his consolation, I can inform him, that not even *this penalty* — not even a *fine* will it be in his power to levy, in the case of Mr. Archer, for reasons, which I shall in the next number more comprehensively detail.

[*To be continued.*]

THEATRICAL MEMOIRS.—In consequence of the indisposition of the artist employed on the engraving of the *Portrait* intended to embellish the *Annual History of the Green Room*—the Public are respectfully informed, that the Appearance of that Work will necessarily be delayed till the beginning of the New Year. Authentic Biographical Communications, addressed to the Editor, under cover to Mr. J. ROACH, Russel Court, Drury Lane, will be thankfully received.

E R R A T U M,

In the last page of the *Wise Man of the East*, concluded in the former Number of the DRAMATIC CENSOR, an entire line, by mistake, is omitted.—After line 5—

“ That Genius still can Fashion’s sway control,”
insert the following line,

“ And vindicate the Empire of the Soul !”

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mitted, under cover to the EDITOR.